

SOM summary, 2021

One of the most striking aspects of the State of the Meeting Reports submitted by 13 meetings and worship groups is the degree to which Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups continued to rely on Quaker values and practices in the midst of a pandemic that left most meetings unable to meet in person. Reports mentioned frequently that spiritual connections, and deep and nurturing worship both in silence and through messages, typically graced their Meetings even if they waxed and waned at times.

Meetings were deeply affected by, and strived to address, the impact of our nation's racist past, even as our society appeared to be more deeply divided than ever on political grounds. Again Quakers relied on testimonies and values as they searched for meaningful ways to be active in addressing these issues.

While some meetings struggled with technology, others found that technology made their meetings more inclusive since barriers of distance and accessibility were eliminated. The exception was in interacting with the youth of the meeting which for reasons of time and computer access generally were not part to the Meeting for Worship. The meeting adults missed the presence of children. Some meetings, however, found that technology enabled better ways of involving youth.

Throughout the year, meetings faced a variety of concerns that might be typical in any year: building concerns, interpersonal issues, concerns about the best way to utilize income when all the necessary expenses have been addressed, or other issues that can arise in any year. Business meetings continued, there were reading groups, spiritual formation groups, and meetings for healing. Several meetings used virtual means to meet for social purposes during the week, primarily to keep in touch and lessen isolation.

As the nation opens up from the pandemic, most meetings are looking to the future with an awareness of different possibilities that leads them to consider what their meetings can be and should be. One meeting closed their state of the meeting report with the following quotation from Hebrews 10:24:

“We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works.”

The Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting appear poised to take on this task.